

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 04333 281013Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 PA-01 ICA-11
SP-02 MCT-02 SY-05 AID-05 ACDA-12 COME-00 /059 W
-----119668 290619Z /21

R 280944Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8983
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
SECDEF
DIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 4333

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SY
SUBJ: TERRORIST BOMBING?

1. ON FRIDAY JULY 21, BOMB EXPLODED IN A MUSLIM
CEMETERY IN ALEPPO ON THE HOLY DAY OF SHAABAN WHEN MUSLIMS
VISIT THE GRAVES OF THEIR DECEASED RELATIVES. ACCORDING
TO SEVERAL ALLEPINES, AT LEAST, ONE PERSON WAS KILLED IN
THE EXPLOSION AND SEVERAL INJURED.

2. THE MOST POPULAR SPECULATION ABOUT THE MOTIVES FOR THE
EXPLOSION IS THAT IT WAS CONNECTED WITH THE SYRO-
RIGHTIST FIGHTING IN LEBANON. CERTAINLY, IT DOES NOT FIT
THE PATTERN OF PREVIOUS ANTI-REGIME INCIDENTS HERE, AND IT
IS PLAUSIBLE THAT THE PERPETRATORS HOPED TO AROUSE
CHRISTIAN-SUNNI TENSIONS IN ALEPPO WHICH HAS THE LARGEST
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PAGE 02 DAMASC 04333 281013Z

CHRISTIAN MINORITY OF ANY MAJOR CITY IS SYRIA. HOW-
EVER, EVEN IF THIS WAS THE MOTIVE IS IS NOT NECESSARY
TO ASSUME THAT IT WAS THE WORK OF LEBANESE CHRISTIANS
OR THEIR SYMPATHIZERS SINCE OTHER ANTI-REGIME GROUPS
HAVE AN INTEREST IN FOMENTING SECTARIAN DISCORD HERE.

3. IT MAY BE THAT IT WAS NOT A TERRORIST ACT AT ALL

BUT AN ACCIDENT SINCE ONE VERSION OF THE STROY CLAIMS THAT A SOLDIER WHILE VISITING THE CEMETERY HAD LAID DOWN HIS EQUIPMENT INCLUDING A GRENADE WHICH WAS FOUND AND DETONATED BY A CHILD.

4. IN ANOTHER SECURITY INCIDENT THE RSO WAS TOLD BY ONE OF HIS POLICE CONTACTS THAT A CAR FULL OF TIMED EXPLOSIVES HAD BEEN FOUND AND DEFUSED BY SYRIAN SECURITY FORCES OUTSIDE THE DAMASCUS INTERNATIONAL FAIR GROUNDS DURING PEAK EVENING VISITOR HOURS. A SUSPECT WAS ALLEGEDLY ARRESTED. WE HAVE RECEIVED NO FURTHER CORROBORATION OF THIS. SECURITY BY SYRIANS STANDARDS HAS BEEN EXTREMELY TIGHT THROUGHOUT THE FAIR AND TO DATE NO KNOWN EXPLOSIONS HAVE OCCURED.
PELLETREAU

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Message Attributes

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Secure: OPEN
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TAGS: PINT, SY
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Type: TE
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